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SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN ROHRABACHER'S MEETINGS IN TOKYO

Classified By: AMBASSADOR J. THOMAS SCHIEFFER, REASONS 1.4(B) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ranking Member of the International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and senior member on the House Committee on Science and Technology, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, met with senior Japanese government members and elected officials March 26-28. Congressman Rohrabacher's meetings focused on Japan's relations with Korea, China, and Taiwan, as well as on the future of the DPRK. During his trip, the Congressman also visited the Japanese government's experimental High Temperature Gas-Cooled Nuclear Reactor (HTGR). End Summary.

JAPAN-CHINA-TAIWAN

12. (C) Japanese Foreign Ministry (MOFA) Mitoji Yabunaka highlighted to Congressman Rohrabacher that the U.S.-Japan alliance will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2010 and that this should serve to remind the U.S., Japan and the rest of the world of the importance of the Alliance's contributions to regional peace and stability. Even China recognizes and respects the U.S.-Japan security alliance, Yabunaka noted, but added that the Chinese military build-up is of great concern to Japan, not just in the Taiwan Strait but beyond it as well. With the Taiwan election behind us, if the Chinese military does not withdraw from the coastline, then the build-up was never about Taiwan. Yabunaka said Japan wants a good working relationship with China, but noted China needs to understand the importance of transparency.

13. (C) Separately, referring to recent concerns in Japan over the safety of Chinese goods, Diet member and former Foreign Minister Taro Aso told Congressman Rohrabacher the Chinese "don't give a damn" about employee health. As an example, Aso said his family's Qent company developed a machine to remove dust from the air to protect its workers' health. A Chinese cement company bought some of these machines, but he discovered during a visit that the Chinese company had never turned them on. This is because the Chinese bosses know that eventually people return to their provinces and new workers come, Aso explained. He went on to say he envisioned political turmoil in China in the near to mid term but warned Congressman Rohrabacher not to expect China to become democratic like the US. The Chinese are more like the Europeans than Americans, racially very different across the board. Aso intimated that in any fracture in China, the

country might divide into linguistic and ethnic regions.

¶4. (C) In a March 27 meeting with Ministry of Defense (MOD) Director General for Defense Policy Nobushige Takamizawa, Rep. Rohrabacher shared his outlook on Taiwan and its relations with China. He asserted that the recent Taiwanese election signals a decidedly pro-China attitude among the people of Taiwan, which also raises significant concerns for U.S. and Japanese security interests. A Taiwanese reunification with China would embolden the PRC's territorial ambitions, which, combined with the recent military build-up, poses a threat to Japan. Takamizawa acknowledged that the situation in the Taiwan Strait is a legitimate security concern for the Japanese government, but stressed that the issue is complicated in the Japanese political context. Responding to Congressman Rohrabacher's comments on the new U.S. airborne laser system currently in development as a possible counter to Chinese military build-up, Takamizawa noted that airborne laser systems are viewed negatively by the Japanese public, who perceive them as being mainly offensive weapons.

¶5. (C) Diet member and former Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma shared other interlocutors' concerns over China. Kyuma agreed with the Congressman that China presents a threat to the overall stability of the Asia-Pacific region and that a partnership of the large democracies in Asia to encourage Chinese transparency on military and political issues might be a good way of approaching China in a non-confrontational manner. China must be "engaged" so that its economic ties with the U.S. and Japan will lead to positive political reforms. Separately, former Vice Admiral in the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Forces (JMSDF) and Mitsubishi Research Institute Senior Advisor Hideaki Kaneda echoed concerns that the Congressman heard throughout his trip. In particular, Kaneda said that the Japanese people have been lulled into a false sense of complacency when it comes to Chinese maritime territorial demands. The JMSDF has traditionally played a complementary role with the U.S. Navy, supporting demining operations and Anti-Submarine Warfare. While the JMSDF is very advanced in terms of those specific defensive roles, it is not sizeable enough to thwart a concerted assault by the growing Chinese Navy. The Japanese government is making a mistake by not increasing its military budget to meet the growing Chinese ability to project power. While the Japanese Navy is being surpassed in capability by the Chinese, Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) is an area in which the US and Japan must continue to cooperate in order to check Chinese advances, Kaneda noted.

JAPAN-KOREA-DPRK

¶6. (C) Diet member Aso said that for the past ten years the Korean peninsula has been a headache for Japan but since Lee Myung-bak was elected president, the Japan-ROK relationship has begun to improve. Internationally-minded South Koreans had waited seven or eight years for this election outcome. On the day of the election, the Korean Embassy in Tokyo threw an enormous party signaling that the long cold winter with Japan was over. In response to Rep. Rohrabacher's assertion that the DPRK missile test of 2006 came at the behest of China, Aso maintained that North Korea was in fact sending a signal to China not to forget about them; North Korea was revealing its desperation through the test. The China-DPRK relationship is not as good as we think, and U.S. troops should remain in the ROK because they keep Chinese troops amassed on the DPRK border at bay. Congressman Rohrabacher and Aso agreed that China's interest in the DPRK is in large part driven by the vast mineral deposits which Pyongyang controls.

¶7. (C) Rep. Rohrabacher expressed a grim outlook on prospects for the Six-Party Talks, predicting to MOD DG Takamizawa that the Bush Administration will give up on the process in light of the DPRK's refusal to make a full declaration of its nuclear programs. He argued that the combination of a

predicted food shortage in North Korea and the new administration in South Korea taking a more hard-line stance against Pyongyang provides a unique opportunity for the United States and Japan to engage the ROK and China to work toward toppling the Kim Jong-il regime. Takamizawa agreed that relevant governments should exercise caution against exaggerating the usefulness of the Six-Party Talks, especially given China's tendency to use its status as the host of the Talks in a self-serving way. On North Korea, Takamizawa stated that regime change -- while an attractive option -- is not realistic. The people in North Korea will likely be prepared to mitigate the upcoming food shortage by relying on "other means" beyond government rations. In addition, the new South Korean government is not likely to effect rapid change in the DPRK, but would rather "buy time" and maintain status quo with North Korea.

NEW NUCLEAR REACTOR?

18. (C) Since the early 1990s, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) has designed, developed, and maintained a High Temperature Gas-cooled Nuclear Reactor (HGTR). As part of Congressman Rohrabacher's visit, JAEA Scientific Consultant Shusaku Shiozawa briefed the Congressman on the current state of the technology. Shusaku noted that the current test reactor has been in operation since 2004. He highlighted that while Japan has made a choice to use Fast Breeder Reactors for future commercial power generation purposes, HTGRs hold promise for cogenerating hydrogen and have extremely robust safety features. Noting that China has an HTGR in development right now, Rep. Rohrabacher expressed keen interest in the HTGR technology and said he may propose to Congress cooperating with Japan and Korea to develop the technology further. He also suggested to his GOJ and Diet interlocutors that Japan and the U.S. should consider working together to provide the reactors to India as part of an overall strategy to redirect resources away from China.

19. (U) The Congressman's staff has cleared this cable.
SCHIEFFER